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Shakespeare's Name - 1879

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SHAKESPEARE'S NAME.

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Which Shall it Be?

New Lamps or Old?

Shaxpere or Shakespeare?

Hence it is that the same name hath been so often disguised unto the staggering of many who have mistook them for different,—

The same they thought was not the same,
And in their name they sought their name.

Thus I am informed that the honourable name of Villiers is written fourteen several ways in their own evidences, and the like, though not so many, variations may be observed in others.—*Fuller's Worthies*, fol. Lond. 1662.

BRIGHTON:
PRINTED BY MESSRS. FLEET AND BISHOP.

1879.

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PREFACE.

The brief observations on Shakespeare's name at Pp. 9 to 12 are extracted from a privately printed volume which I have now in the press, and are separately distributed in the hope of inducing further researches to ascertain the general practice adopted in the *autographs* of surnames in the time of the great dramatist. Upon looking over my collections on the subject I find numerous lists of varieties of the same name collected from records and printed books, but comparatively only a few derived from signatures. Any additional information in this direction would be useful in absolutely determining the accuracy of the main position, of which even now there can hardly be a reasonable doubt, that there was then no settled orthography of surnames and that a signature of those days is not conclusive evidence of the mode in which a person's name should be spelt.

Lord Robert Dudley's signature was generally Duddeley, his wife's, Duddley, and a relative's, Dudley. Allen, the actor, signed his name at various times, Alleyn, Aleyn, Allin, and Allen,

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while his wife's signature appears as Alleyne. Henslowe's autographs are in the forms of Hensley, Henslow, and Henslowe. Samuel Rowley signed himself, Rouley, Rowley, and Rowleye. Burbage sometimes wrote Burbadg while his brother signed himself Burbadge. One of the poet's sons-in-law wrote himself Quyney, Quyneye, and Conoy, while his brother, the curate, signed, Quiney. His other son-in-law, Dr. Hall, signed himself Hawle, Halle, Haule and Hall. Alderman Sturley, of Stratford-on-Avon, signed his name sometimes in that form and sometimes, Strelley. Similar variations occur in Christian names of the time, that of the poet's friend, Julius Shaw, positively appearing as Julyus, Julius, Julie, Julyne, Jule, Julines, Julynes, July, Julye, Julyius and Julyles.

Now, in the face of even this amount of evidence, as Shakespeare's undisputed signatures were written *on three occasions only*, it is clearly not safe to assume that he invariably signed himself *Shakspere*. On the contrary, as his name is spelt Shakespeare in his two printed letters, the probability is decidedly in favour of his not having adopted any uniform practice in the matter. As for the insertion or omission of such a letter as an *e* in a name, such a trifle as that

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clearly appears to have been formerly considered of no consequence at all.

There is but one consideration, the tendency of the curtailed form to encourage a wrong pronunciation, which renders the orthography in Shakespeare's case of any much consequence. Whichever form we may select, few of us, I apprehend, would wish it to be pronounced otherwise than it was by Ben Jonson and as it was spoken by his literary contemporaries at least as early as 1592. Rare Ben's lines must once again be quoted,—

> ——— Look how the father's face
> Lives in his issue; even so the race
> Of Shakespeare's mind and manners brightly shines
> In his well-turned and true-filed lines;
> In each of which he seems to *shake a lance*,
> As *brandish'd* at the eyes of ignorance.

In the earliest notice of the poet by name in printed literature, 1594, the surname appears with a hyphen, Shake-speare, and so in many other as unusual instances.

There is nothing like an argument based on a single leading and apparently conclusive fact for misleading the inexperienced or the unwary. Shakespeare spelt his name in a certain fashion and it is obvious that it should be so printed.

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The celebrated Bill Stumps, although he could not follow suit educationally, has no manner of doubt about it. Neither have a large number of more learned men who have not been at the trouble to investigate the subject. It may, however, be fairly stated that all the scholars of note who have taken the pains to do so, Dr. Ingleby and others, adopt the longer form. To follow signatures would, indeed, revolutionize the whole system of early nominal orthography and lead to preposterous results.

J. O. HALLIWELL-PHILLIPPS.

Hollingbury Copse,
Brighton,
4 November, 1879.

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SHAKESPEARE'S NAME.

There are five and only five undisputed genuine signatures of the great dramatist known to exist, and in each instance he has written his surname without an *e* at the conclusion of the first syllable. To those who would shudder at the idea of the greatest author of the world not knowing how to spell his own name, or to those who are unacquainted with the state of the surname question in his time, the poet's own written authority would appear to be decisive. A little enquiry would, however, create a suspicion that such a conclusion may be illusory.

Orthography of every kind was in an unsettled state in the poet's time, and there was no fixed standard in the case of surnames, few persons then adhering to an uniform mode of spelling even in their own signatures. With respect to the Shakespeares, neither the parents of the dramatist nor their daughters could write at all, and the first members of the family competent to affix their signatures instead of a mark, an accomplishment for which they were indebted to the Free School at Stratford-on-

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Avon, were the poet and his brothers. One autograph only of any of the latter has been discovered, and in that the important letter *e* distinctly appears; so that, if we adopted the system of guiding our early surname orthography by autographs, we must, when speaking of the poet, write *Shakspere*, but, when we have occasion to mention his brother, it must be *Shakespere*,—a manifest absurdity.

It thus being certain that there was no uniform orthography of the surname adopted by the Shakespeare family, we could only prefer the form of *Shakspere* on the suppositions not only that the poet invariably so wrote his name, but that it was his wish that the curtailed spelling should be that of his own, or of the family surname. With respect to the former surmise, there is practically merely the evidence afforded by three late signatures, for those attached to the Will, having been written at the same time, can only be taken, for the purposes of this argument, as one example. In regard to the other theory, it is clear that he had no fancy for the general adoption of the signature form, for otherwise it is incredible that his name should appear as Shakespeare in the only two works that we can safely believe to

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have been printed under his own superintendence. That the latter was the form he desired that his name should take in literature there can be no reasonable doubt, and, as if to decide the question, to the only contribution he ever made to the work of another author the name there appears with a hyphen,—William Shake-speare. Moreover, the poet's two intimate friends and editors in 1623 uniformly give his name in its full proportions, although one of them in the same volume allows his own to appear in different forms.

In the original tracings from the Will made by Steevens in company with Malone in the year 1776, an *a* is clearly shown in the second syllable of that one of the signatures which has become somewhat indistinct since that period. This is the best evidence we can now have on the subject, and, if accepted, it would show that the form of the poet's signature was a matter of accident. For the secure discussion of the question I have assumed that all the signatures are uniformly spelt. The really important letter is the *e* not the *a*, for the pronunciation of the name practically depends upon the former. That the great dramatist was familiarly addressed at Stratford-on-Avon as Mr. Shaxpere

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may be gathered from the orthography adopted by the scrivener who drew up the Will, but that he was known then amongst his own literary friends, and that he ought to be known now in literature, as Shakespeare is sufficiently established by the testimony of Ben Jonson and many others.

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NOTE.

The following observations on the same subject were written by me many years ago, and are appended to the preceding brief analysis, although a little repetition is thereby involved.

The indistinctness with which the signatures to the will are written has occasioned conflicting opinions respecting the idle question of the orthography of the poet's name; some contending it is *Shakspere* in all the instances, others that the letter *a* appears in the second syllable in the last. The question will probably ever be doubtful; for if we read *Shakspere*, a redundancy appears for which it is difficult to account, the final stroke belonging to an *e*, certainly not to a mere flourish; and it would be scarcely prudent to express a decided opinion on the matter, the signatures being apparently traced by a tremulous hand, and very badly executed. In the probate of the will, of which a copy, made in 1747, is in MS. Lansd. 721, the signature is written *Shackspeare*. The first autograph has been much damaged since it was traced by Steevens in 1776, when he was accompanied by Malone, and the latter thus mentions their visit to the Prerogative Office, in a manuscript in the Bodleian Library,—"On the 24th of September, 1776, I went with my friend Mr. Steevens, to the Prerogative Office in Doctors Commons to see Shakspeare's original will, in order to get a fac-similie of the handwriting. The will is written in the clerical hand of that age on three small sheets, fastned at top like a lawyer's brief. Shakspeare's name is signed at the bottom of the first and second sheet, and his final signature, 'by me William Shakspeare,' is in the middle of the third sheet. The name, however, at the bottom of the first sheet, is not in the usual place, but in the margin at the left hand, and is so different from the others that we doubted whether it was his handwriting. He appears to have been very ill and weak when he signed his will, for the hand is very irregular and tremulous. I suspect he signed his name at the end of the will first, and so went backwards, which will account for that in the first page being worse written than the rest, the hand growing gradually weaker." The three sheets of paper on which the will is written are joined together in the middle of the top margins, which are covered with a narrow slip of parchment; but although protected with the greatest care, if it be left in its present state, it is to be feared

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nothing can prevent the gradual decay of this precious relic, which has even materially suffered since Steevens made tracings from it seventy years ago. The office in which it is kept is properly guarded by the strictest regulations, for manuscripts required for legal purposes demand a verification seldom necessary in literary enquiries; and it seems these rules forbid the separation of the sheets of the will, which, singly, could be safely preserved between plates of glass and so daily examined without the slightest injury. At present the folding and unfolding requisite on every inspection of the document imperceptibly tend to the deterioration of the fragile substance on which it is written; and it is earnestly to be hoped that the consent of the registrars will at length be given to the adoption of a course which shall permanently save this interesting record of the last wishes of the great poet, the most important memorial of him that has descended to our days.

The three signatures of Shakespeare attached to his will, that appended to the indenture preserved in the library of the Corporation of London, and the one on the mortgage deed of the property in the Blackfriars, are the only autographs of the poet of unquestionable authority that are now known to exist. It is unnecessary to say that many alleged autographs of Shakespeare have been exhibited; but forgeries of them are so numerous, and the continuity of design, which a fabricator cannot readily produce in a long document, is so easy to obtain in a mere signature that the only safe course is to adopt none as genuine on internal evidence. A signature in a copy of Florio's translation of Montaigne, 1603, is open to this objection; that the *verbal* evidence as to its existence only extends as far back as 1780, after the publication of Steeven's fac-simile of the last autograph in the will, of which it may be a copy with intentional variations. The well-known coincidence of a passage in this work with one in the Tempest, so far from being a testimony in favour of the autograph, is the reverse; for the similarity was pointed out long before 1780, and nothing is more likely than that a forger should select a book known to have been read by Shakespeare for the object on which to exercise his skill. Even supposing we can find the same formed capitals elsewhere, and a contraction precisely similar to the very unusual one over the letter *m*, no evidence on such a subject which does not com-

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mence much earlier can safely be confided in. On the other hand, there are no indications of a character which could be confidently asserted to be fatal to its authenticity; and if it could be *proved* to have been in existence so far back as 1780, I should feel inclined to rely upon it on the ground that the forgeries of that day do not, as far as we know, exhibit that skill which must be allowed to attend the signature under consideration, if it be not genuine. A comparison of it with the five acknowledged signatures will, however, clearly show that it wants the *looped S* of those autographs, the character of that letter in the Florio copy being altogether different. My opinion that there is a doubt is given with great reluctance, for it would be well to know there exists one book, at least, which the great poet handled and read; but invention has been active in the formation of Shakespeare autographs, and this may possibly be of them. There was an inhabitant of Stratford in the latter part of the last century, who, though in many respects scrupulously honest, descended to the production of several literary impositions,—I refer to the "poet Jordan," a person of some natural talent, who died in the year 1798. Jordan certainly manufactured one Shakespeare autograph on the fly-leaf of an old edition of Bacon's Essays which he showed to Mr. Wheeler; and the fabricator of one may have been the ingenious author of others.

It will be observed that it is, therefore, a matter of great uncertainty whether Shakespeare was one of the few persons of the time who adopted an uniform orthography in his signature; but, on the supposition that he always wrote his name *Shakspere*, it was contended as early as 1784 that it should be printed in this curtailed form. The question is one of very small importance, and the only circumstance worth consideration in the matter is the tendency of this innovation to introduce the pronunciation of *Shaxpere*, a piece of affectation so far dangerous, inasmuch as it harmonizes not with the beautiful lines that have been consecrated to his memory by Ben Jonson and other eminent poets; and those who have adopted it seem to have overlooked the fact that, in the orthography of proper names, the printed literature of the day is the only safe criterion. In the case of Shakespeare, there are the poems of Lucrece and Venus and Adonis, published under his own super-

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intendence, in which the name occurs *Shakespeare*, and so it is found in almost every work printed in the lifetime of the poet. Shakespeare's son-in-law in the earlier part of his life signed his name *Hawle*, and afterwards *Hall*. In 1581, Sir Walter Raleigh signed his name *Rauley*; five years afterwards, we find it *Ralegh*, and so in innumerable instances. There were doubtlessly exceptions, as in the case of Lord Burghley and a few others; but there is no sufficient evidence to show that Shakespeare adhered to any uniform rule. "Our English proper names," observes Edward Coote, Master of the Free-school at Bury St. Edmunds, in his *English Schoole Master*, ed. 1621, p. 23," are written as it pleaseth the painter, or as men have received them by tradition;" and after giving some examples, he exclaims, "yea, I have knowne two naturall brethren, both learned, to write their owne names differently." It is somewhat singular there is a case here stated which exactly applies to the name under consideration. Shakespeare's brother Gilbert spelt his name *Shakespere*, so that if we adopted the system of guiding our orthography by autographs, we should, when speaking of the poet, write *Shakspere* or *Shakspeare*; but when we have occasion to mention his relative, it must be *Shakespere*.

The only method of reconciling these inconsistencies is to adopt the name as it is bequeathed to us by his contemporaries; and there is a great additional reason for doing so when we reflect on the certainty that the poet, who used his pen, or *shook his spear*, as Bancroft has it in his Epigrammes, 1639 was called Shake-speare by his literary friends. The martial character of the name was admitted from an early period, Verstegan classing it with "surnames imposed upon the first bearers of them for valour and feates of armes." Camden derives it from the mere use of the weapon; and Bogan, in his additions to the Archæologicæ Atticæ of Francis Rous, says that *Shakespeare* is equivalent to *soldier*. The poet's coat-armour affords another evidence in the same direction; a parallel instance occurring in the broken lance in the arms of Nicholas *Break-speare*, as described by Upton, in his treatise *De Studio Militari*, fol. Lond. 1654.

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